

Success in Iraq is dependent on several factors: controlling violence, creating a stable government of national unity, delivering basic services and the promise of economic development to the Iraqi people, and establishing strong and supportive relations between Iraq and its neighbors in the region. If any of these pillars are missing, Iraq's future becomes uncertain and unstable. America can help, but ultimately the Iraqis must achieve these goals on their own.

This amendment calls for us to begin shifting that responsibility, even as we work to shore up international cooperation and support and reaffirm our commitment to intense ongoing engagement.

Since I became a United States Senator, I have twice traveled to Iraq to get a better sense of the status of our mission. Each time, I have been overwhelmed with admiration for our servicemen and women who are serving so honorably, and who, along with their families, are sacrificing so much.

I am so proud of our troops and we must do right by them. Sitting on our hands while policy drifts from one goal and mission to another with no end in sight just isn't good enough. By the end of this year, we will have been in Iraq nearly as long as we were engaged in World War II, but as sectarian violence is on the rise, the picture is getting murkier and murkier. Congress needs to get into the mix—but to get in responsibly. I hope that my colleagues, both those who support this amendment and those who find fault with it, will engage in this debate in that spirit. Our men and women in uniform, and the American people, deserve nothing less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARTINEZ). Who yields time?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Oregon up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, since the conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2,808 American men and women have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Of that number, 63 are Oregonians, or those who have Oregon ties. There are 63 patriots among that total.

I rise today to honor them, but I also feel compelled to come here this afternoon to pay particular honor to Tom Tucker who recently lost his life and to do what I can through my words to assuage in some possible way, if possible, the grief of his parents, Wes and Meg Tucker of Madras, OR. Army PVT Thomas Tucker was born in Pineville, OR, in central Oregon, in the beautiful rimrock country of that part of our State. He grew up in Madras and graduated from Madras High School in 1999. He worked in a variety of jobs before feeling the call to serve his country and enlisted in the U.S. Army in July of 2005. He was attached to the First

Battalion of the 502nd Infantry Regiment of the Second Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. He has been in Iraq since February of 2006.

When word came through that he had been taken hostage by al-Qaida fighters in Iraq, I called his father Wes. I wasn't very far into the conversation when it was clear to me that I was talking to a dad who was also a patriot, was proud of his son and fearful for the consequences that may befall him.

The worst-of-all news came out when the whole country, and particularly my State, learned not only that Thomas had given his life but that he had been tortured, that his body had been defiled and had been booby-trapped to take the lives of other American soldiers.

I have no words sufficient to tell the Tucker family how truly sorry I am for the extent of their loss. Yet I stand in awe and amazement that this morning on the NBC "Today" program there came Wes Tucker's face. And he said: "Our son, as far as we are concerned, has died for the freedom of everyone in the United States."

I could not agree with him more.

Wes and Meg Tucker are made of sterner stuff. They did not blame the President. They did not blame the military. They simply acknowledged that their son was in the service of his country knowing the risk and willing to sacrifice it all.

I salute them, and I will never forget them or their son.

I am told by news accounts that Madras, OR, a town of 6,000 people, has now become a family of 6,000 people, gathering around the Tucker family, to offer whatever consolation they can and the support that is required, to let the Tucker family know that their son is an American hero now and forever.

Many wonder, what did Tom die for? I believe, as his father said, that he died for his country, that he died for freedom's sake, and the cause of freedom is one that comes with a very high price. It has hit home hard in Oregon today.

Al-Qaida is a serpent with many heads. It found Tom, and in finding him revealed the ugliness, the barbarity, the brutality of the enemy that we face.

Understand, al-Qaida's words in this war, their purposes, their intentions, their objectives are to create—these are not George Bush's words, these are their words—a new caliphate in the Middle East such as existed for several centuries, ranging from Spain as far as Pakistan, to establish sharia law.

If you want to know what sharia law is, look at the governments of the Taliban and the brutality that attended their government. It is for the extermination of the state of Israel, and it is for the holding hostage of western civilization. I believe Tom Tucker died in opposition to these hideous aims of our enemies on Earth today.

Anyone who believes that America does not have a stake in this is deeply mistaking themselves.

During my first term in the U.S. Senate I served on the Foreign Relations Committee. I wasn't on that committee long until I was simply amazed and overwhelmed in terms of my schedule by the number of foreign leaders who sought out an audience in my office seeking trade, aid, and military alliance with the United States.

I used to wonder, why do they come to us? Why must we solve their problems? It was evident because they knew America had values for which it was willing to pay a high price.

So I have to ask, why us? And history's answer is, why not us?

In the 20th century, the United States of America and a number of our stalwart friends—the British come quickly to mind—have filled the void to stop tyranny when our defense, first, our interests, our values and our allies required our help. It is no different now in 21st century.

We all want our kids to come home. I pray for that daily. And I am thankful that their numbers are declining and that they are coming home.

What this debate is about and the difference we share with our friends on the other side of the aisle is simply the wisdom of announcing a date for withdrawal.

As I have studied history, I have never found an instance whereby victory is won by announcing retreat. Wisdom counsels, I believe, that we hold our cards closer to our vest.

Al-Qaida is counting on us to go home just as they cite in their Web sites our retreat from Beirut, our inaction in the face of innumerable, outrageous terrorist attacks during the 1990s—and they took it all for weakness.

I want our kids to come home. But I want us to see the ugly face of al-Qaida and understand the deadliness and earnestness of their purposes and how antithetical they are to the future of this Nation and to the future of our children and to the civilization that we enjoy in such abundance in this blessed land.

Al-Qaida is counting on us to set a date. It is for that reason that I will vote against any amendment that sets a date.

I want to express to my colleagues on the other side that the rhetoric is too heated. When I hear things like "Bush lied, kids died," or even on our side, "retreat"—and whatever the mantra is—my soul cries out for something more dignified.

I don't believe their dissent is unpatriotic. I simply believe it to be unwise. It is a tactical mistake of monumental proportions.

I do not know how long the war on terror will go. But I do know that we have an interest in it. We learned that interest on 9/11. We learn that interest with the death of every soldier.

I yield the floor with a plea that we keep our tactics to ourselves and that we understand that America will not be defeated but that we can defeat ourselves.